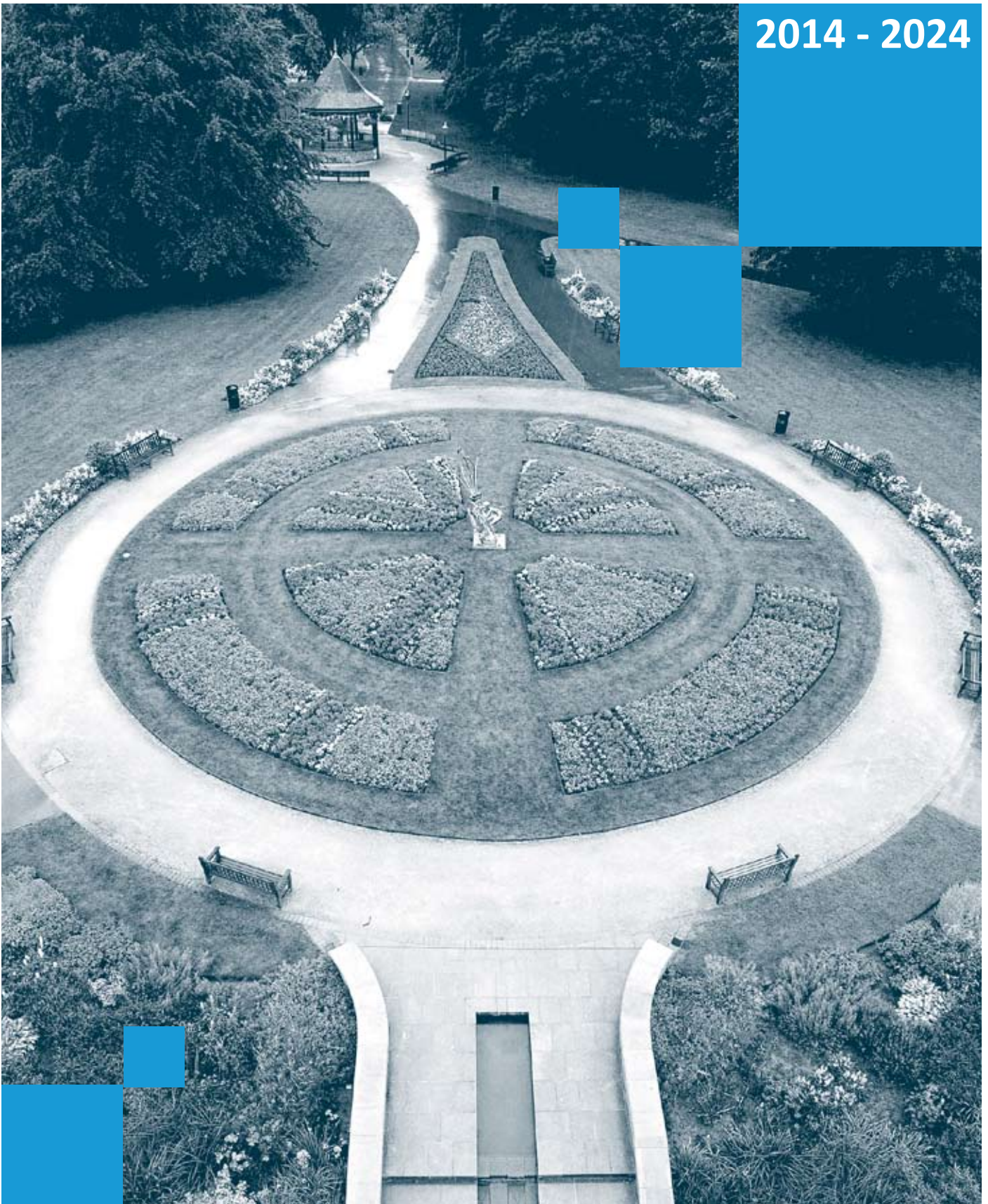


2014 - 2024



Green Space Strategy

Rugby Borough Council

Making Green Space Your Place

March 2014



Foreword

The Borough of Rugby has some superb green spaces that everyone can be proud of. They are places where people can relax, enjoy nature, play or take part in sport or recreation. They are essential for the health and well-being of the Borough. However, there is more that can be done to improve the quality of our green spaces so that a greater diversity of people can visit and enjoy them.

We know there is a high level of support for green spaces, at a time when they have never been under so much pressure. The Green Space Strategy for Rugby sets out proposals for how existing green spaces can be improved to be safer, cleaner, more accessible, and more sustainable, especially within increased economic uncertainty.

This Green Space Strategy is a key step towards protecting and improving Rugby's green spaces. It provides a vision and clear objectives for how the Council and its partners would like to see green spaces planned and managed for the next ten years. Some of the improvements proposed in this strategy will take time but this is a clear direction of travel.

Improving Rugby's green spaces will also require the support and commitment of the whole community – there are many ways in which everyone can help to improve our green spaces. I hope that you will play your part in helping everyone who lives and works in our Borough to achieve our shared vision to make Green Space Your Place in the Borough of Rugby.



Craig Humphry
Leader of Rugby Borough Council



Dr Mark Williams
Sustainable Environment Portfolio Holder

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Executive summary

This is the first Green Space Strategy for Rugby. The purpose of the document is to set out the policies and actions for delivery and management of green space within the Borough of Rugby for the next 10 years. The overall vision is:

“To maintain and enhance high quality and accessible green spaces that meet the needs of our residents and visitors whilst protecting and improving biodiversity.”

key priorities include:

Making the links - demonstrating how green space can delivery and make a positive contribute to multiply agendas such as health and well being, training and education.

Making informed decisions - using research and evidence to ensure green spaces are planned and delivered where there is greatest need and demand.

Making resources go further - understanding the value of available resources and prioritising policies and actions to maximise outcomes for people and the environment.

Making positive and lasting change - working with communities and stakeholders to ensure green space provision is sustainable.

Making sure plans are realistic - letting people know what can be expected and delivering the GSS within available means.



Overall policies and actions relate to safe guarding and enhancing green space for people and wildlife and include the following themes:

*Theme 1 - **Strategic** green space*

*Theme 2 - **Quality** green space*

*Theme 3 - **Accessible** green space*

*Theme 4 - **Healthy** green space*

*Theme 5 - **Welcoming** green space*

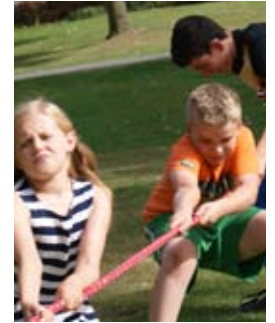
*Theme 6 - **Sustainable** green space*

*Theme 7 - **Community** green space*

*Theme 8 - **Network** green space*

*Theme 9 - **Funding** green space*

*Theme 10 - **Natural** green space*



The Green Space Strategy will form the framework planning and delivering green space. It will be a dynamic document, which is reviewed each year. During each review new issues, policies and actions will be considered and incorporated to reflect priorities and available resources.



1. Introduction

Green spaces are an integral and essential part of everyday life and contribute to the health and well-being of everyone living and working within the Borough of Rugby. Research has shown that 91% of people believe that public parks and open spaces improve their quality of life (CABE & MORI 2004). Well used and maintained green spaces make a significant and valuable contribution to people's quality of life, provide spaces for wildlife and enhance the environment of our town, parishes and rural areas. This is the first Green Space Strategy for Rugby and the document sets out how green space will be planned and managed over the next ten years.

The Green Space Strategy (GSS) for Rugby has been produced to enable all those involved with the planning, provision and management of Rugby's green spaces to have a clear structure in which to work and set priorities. The strategy has therefore been produced to set the policies and delivery framework for the strategic provision and management of green space within the Borough of Rugby between 2014 and 2024. The information contained within the document has been informed by previous studies relating to strategic planning of green space and also a recent review of parks and grounds services undertaken by Rugby Borough Council. This information has been summarised and combined to provide an integrated document to inform and guide the strategic planning and day to day delivery of green space in Rugby.

1.1 Scope of the strategy

The GSS for Rugby has been developed to reflect and respond to a number of issues highlighted in recent years. The scope of the GSS is concerned predominantly with the planning, management and delivery of publicly accessible green space. The rationale for completing the GSS includes:

- The need to bring together a number of technical studies and planning policy information to inform the standards for green space within the Borough;
- The need to understand the context of green space in Rugby and how it contributes to Rugby's economic, environmental and social well being;
- The requirement to have clear policies for green space management;
- The need to establish and set priorities in the face of financial pressure and growing customer expectation.

The purpose and scope of the GSS for Rugby is therefore to:

- Demonstrate the value of green space in achieving corporate, strategic and community objectives;
- Develop a clear and shared vision between the Borough Council, partners and the community;
- Ensure that existing and future green spaces enhance the quality of life of local communities

and the environment and promote greater civic pride and social inclusion;

- Maximise resources to support green space improvements through external funding opportunities and allocation of revenue budgets;
- Provide a framework for how the voluntary and community sector can help contribute to the future management and maintenance of green spaces;
- Ensure that the health and safety of staff, residents and visitors is inherent within the design, management and maintenance of Rugby's public green spaces;
- Provide evidence to underpin the negotiations for planning agreements and the Community Infrastructure levy in relation to green space provision and financial contributions;
- Giving a clear and strong vision for the direction of Rugby Borough Council's Parks and Grounds Service.

The production of the GSS has been completed by Rugby Borough Council's Parks and Grounds Services with assistance from other Council departments and Red Kite Network Limited. It is however not a standalone document and has been informed by a number of national policies, technical studies and local strategies. Rugby Borough Council Officers, partners and stakeholders have also informed the content of the document.

Figure 1 below shows the strategic relationship of the GSS in the context of Rugby.

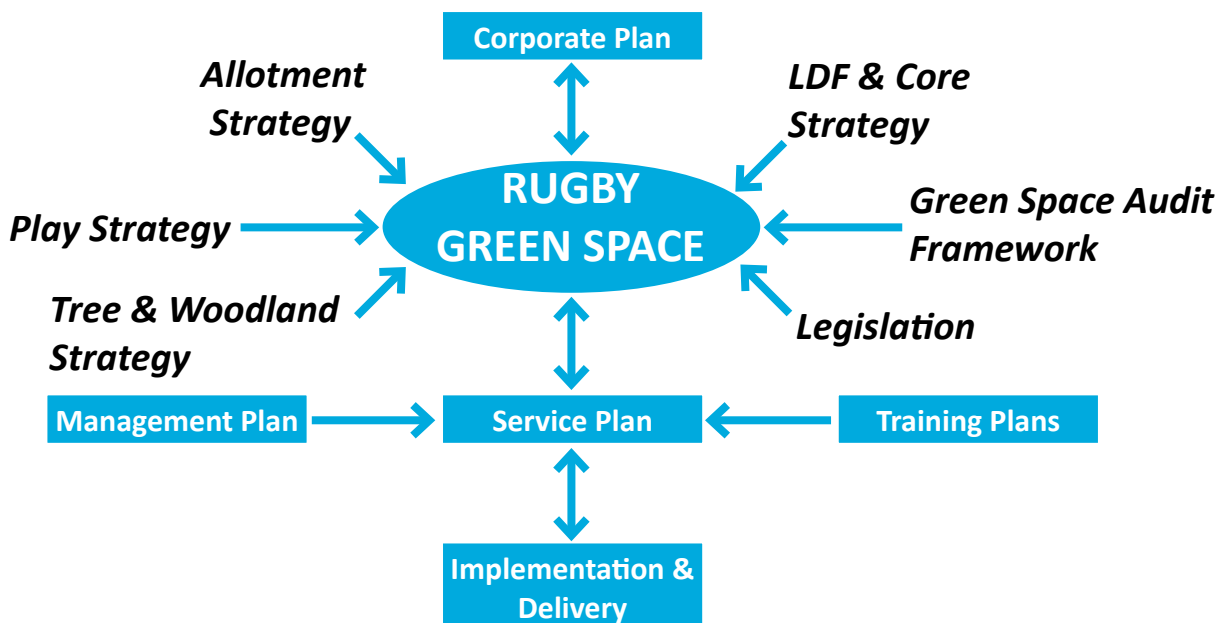


Figure 1: Strategic relationship of GSS

1. Introduction

The GSS for Rugby will be in the most part implemented and delivered by Rugby Borough Council. However it is anticipated that the documents will be used by a range of audiences outlined in table 1 below.

Audience	Involvement
Rugby Borough Council Members	Determine and set strategic policies and financial investment.
Rugby Borough Council Planning Officers	Provide information in relation to green space standards for the Borough's Local Development Framework and to determine planning applications.
Rugby Borough Council Parks and Grounds Officers	Provide information and actions for green space projects, improvements, management and maintenance.
Partners	Provide information and supporting guidance to partners such as the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.
Community and stakeholders	Provide information on priorities and actions and how local people can get involved with their green spaces.
External bodies, organisations and companies	Provide information on green space standards and protocols to inform planning applications or other spatial planning requirements.

Table 1: Rugby GSS audiences

The scope of the GSS seeks to bring together both strategic planning and operational delivery of green space in the Borough. The content of the strategy is therefore set out in sections depending on the audience or reader. The content of the GSS can be summarised as follows.

- **Executive summary** - Headline summary of themes and policies aimed at those requiring an overview of the GSS.
- **Introduction**- A description of the need, rationale and scope of the GSS.
- **Setting the scene for green space in Rugby**- Background information and context of green space in Rugby and relevant issues facing the Borough.
- **Strategic planning for green space in Rugby**- A summary position statement and information relating to planning policies and green space standards within the Borough.
- **Strategic management for green space in Rugby**- A summary position statement and information relating to the maintenance, management and delivery of the green space services in the Borough.
- **Planning for change and management**- A summary evaluation outlining the future requirements of green space within the Borough.
- **Policies and actions**- Details of strategic themes, policies and actions to be adopted by Rugby Borough Council as part of the GSS for Rugby.

1.2 The need for a green space strategy

Green space has an influence on many aspects of the environmental, social, economic and cultural mix relating to Rugby. Green spaces are not just areas to admired; they serve a necessary function in terms on the vital infrastructure of the public realm for urban and rural parts of the Borough.

The need for a green space strategy is driven by a number of factors, including national guidance, planning policy, corporate strategies, local community aspirations and service requirements. Figure 2 below outlines the key drivers relating the green space planning and provision.

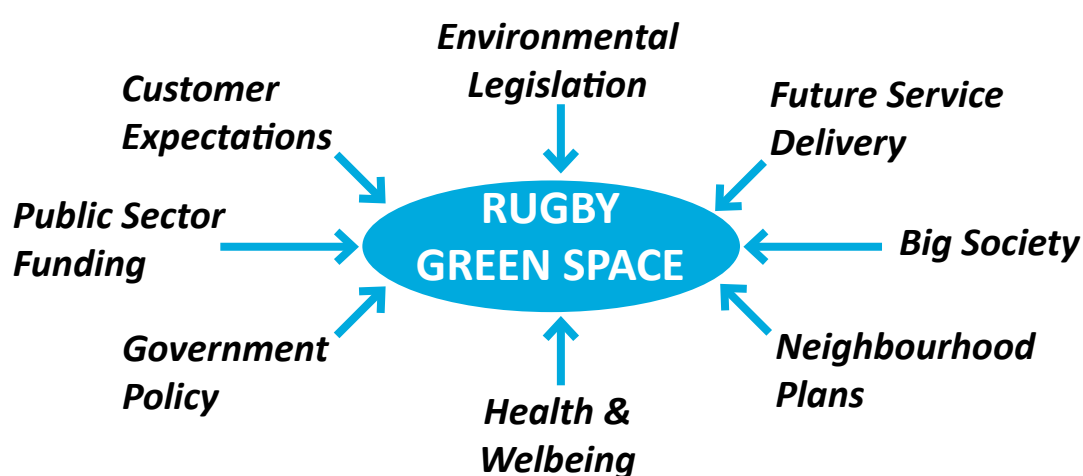


Figure 2: GSS drivers

In simple terms the need for a Green Space Strategy is governed by a number of influences and will:

- Help everyone understand the value of green spaces in achieving corporate, strategic and community objectives;
- Help in the establishment of a policy framework for provision, design, management, accessibility and maintenance;
- Provide a clear framework for voluntary and community groups to contribute to the ongoing management and maintenance of green spaces;
- Help in identifying where improvements are required and setting priorities;
- Help to ensure that existing and future green spaces enhance the quality of life for local residents, promotes greater civic pride and social interaction;
- Identify what needs protecting, enhancing or creating;
- Help make the case for funding opportunities and planning obligations;
- Help to respond to the changing climate.

1. Introduction

1.3 The vision for green space in Rugby

The shared vision for green space in Rugby is:

“To maintain and enhance high quality and accessible green spaces that meet the needs of our residents and visitors whilst protecting and improving biodiversity.”



1.4 Defining green space

Within the GSS the term green space is referred to on numerous occasions. There is no set definition of the term green space but for the purposes of this document green space is used generically to describe the network of publicly accessible open spaces that can be used and enjoyed by the community. The former planning policy guidance 17 (PPG17) provided a definition of green space and as part of the background research completed in 2008 by Halcrow and Alliance Planning (see section 3 below) the following definitions, for publicly accessible green space typologies, outlined in table 2, have been adopted by Rugby Borough Council.

Green Space Typology (PPG 17)	Summary definition
Parks & gardens	These particular sites would normally contain a whole range of quality facilities and experiences for all members of the public. These can be classed as the Borough's main parks and would allow the visitor to spend several hours enjoying the open space environment. An example would be Caldecott Park or Hillmorton Recreation Ground.
Local amenity green space	These sites are typically smaller than the parks and gardens sites and are very much a local facility, although may form part of a wider network of green spaces. An example would be East Union Street.
Natural and semi natural green space	These are areas whose primary purpose is for nature conservation. An example would be Swift Valley Park.
Cemeteries & closed churchyards	<p>These are important green spaces not only acting as functional burial grounds but as places of sanctuary for the bereaved attending graves and seeking a place for quiet contemplation. In some cases they also have heritage significance, with the many memorials.</p> <p>Rugby Borough Council has three active sites, one closed cemetery and a number of closed church yards that they are responsible. Rugby Borough Council is currently seeking to develop additional land to sustain burial space for the next 150-200 years. An example in the context of Rugby would be Clifton Road Cemetery.</p>
Green corridors	These are green routes/ links including disused railway lines that connect different areas of green space. Their primary purpose is for walking, cycling or wildlife habitats. An example being Great Central Walk.
Allotments and community gardens	These areas allow for community gardening and growing of fruit and vegetables. There are six sites owned by Rugby Borough Council including Eastlands Allotments.
Outdoor sports facilities	These are large, often flat areas of grassland, (often found on local amenity green spaces) which have the primary function of providing sports pitches such as Whinfield Recreation Ground.
Children and young people's facilities	These included equipped children's play areas, youth facilities and ball courts such as Brindley Road Play Area.

Table 2: Rugby green space typologies and definitions

2. Setting the scene for green space in rugby

2.1 Green space and Rugby

About Rugby

The Borough of Rugby covers an area of 137 square miles (356 square kilometers), on the very eastern edge of the West Midlands region in the County of Warwickshire and is predominantly bordered by the rural areas of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire and by the city of Coventry to the north. The total population of the Borough is 100,500 (based on mid 2011 population estimates) with the majority of these (67,000) living within the urbanised area of Rugby. This figure is predicted to increase to 106,300 by 2026, with the urban extensions that are planned for the town of Rugby.

The economic base of the Borough relies on a mixture of heavy industry, retail and distribution industries and manufacturing, with an increasing push towards short stay tourism.

Ethnic groups account for only 3.69% of the population. Other than Christianity, Hindu and Muslim faiths are the predominant religions. The Borough ranks 246th out of 354 local authorities (1st being the most deprived) under the Index of Multiple Deprivation. In terms of multiple deprivations, there are a number of wards which feature within the top ten most deprived wards Warwickshire. Of these Brownsover South is ranked number 1 in the county with Newbold (8th) and Benn (10th).

Rugby and quality of life

The Warwickshire Quality of Life Report 2012/13 provides a snapshot of many of the issues facing the communities of Rugby in comparison with other Warwickshire districts. Key factors relating to Rugby include:

- Largest comparable rise on in population with an increase of 14.9% since 2001;
- A projected rise in total population of 114,900 by 2035;
- Above county average youth unemployment;
- Above country average rise in worklessness claimants;
- Areas of Brownsover, Benn and Newbold with above county average of 16-19 year olds not In training, education or employment;
- Lowest household income levels in Rugby Town Central area compared to county average;
- Above national average demand for housing;
- General average levels of anti social behavior compared to rest of county;
- Health deprivation in Town Centre area;
- A general average prevalence of adults who are obese
- People in Rugby Town Central area least likely to feel nothing can be done to change life;
- A change in more deprived areas between 2007 and 2010.

People's perceptions of green space in Rugby

The 2010 Rugby Borough Council state of the Borough survey provides a snap shot of people's perception of their environment. The following points are relevant to this strategy:

- Parks and open spaces ranked 8th out of 21 things that are important to make somewhere a good place to live. This was above issues such as traffic congestion, public transport, cultural facilities and sport and leisure facilities;
- Activities for teenagers ranked 3rd out of 21 things that would improve Rugby Borough as a good place to live;
- 35.9% of respondents to the survey had never or not visited Caldecott Park in the last year;
- 48.9% rated parks and open spaces as clean, with only 0.2% stating that parks and open spaces were very dirty;
- 25.8% of respondents stated that parks and open spaces should have a priority with 67.7% stating that priority is about right;
- The majority of respondents rated parks and open spaces as good or very good;
- When asked 11.9% stated that they were actively involved in a group or organisation that helped improve local quality of life;
- When asked 86.2% of respondents said they would not consider volunteering to help run a group or organisation that would improve quality of life;
- Only 7.3% of respondents said that there should be less spending on parks and open spaces compared to other discretionary services with 73% stating spending should remain the same and 19.5% stating that spending should be increased for parks and open spaces.

Strategic planning overview

Rugby Borough Council adopted its Core Strategy in June 2011. The Core Strategy contains strategic allocations to meet the Boroughs housing, employment and retail requirements and includes the provision and allocation of green space.

Work has commenced on a new Local Plan which will set out development management policies that will guide applications within the Borough. As part of the preparatory work for the new Local Plan a discussion document was issued for consultation and agreed on 1st July 2013. The discussion assessed the conformity of current policies that form Rugby Borough's development plan (saved Local Plan policies 2006) against the recently published National Planning Policy Framework. The discussion document has identified issues and gaps that will need to be addressed in the future.

2. Setting the scene for green space in rugby

The current standards for the provision of green space are based on saved Rugby Borough Local Plan 2006 Policy LR1, which was informed by Open Space Audit 2003 and Open Space Strategy. The green space designations are those contained within the RBC Local Plan and will be reviewed as part of the new Local Plan.). As part of the new Local Plan it is proposed that a revised and updated green space audit and assessment will be produced to inform policies and the safeguarding of green space. This strategy will then be updated and revised to reflect any findings of the green space audit and assessment.

Rugby's green space network

There are substantial areas of managed open space within the more urban areas and which connect to and provide access to the wider countryside. Parks and open spaces are important landmarks in the borough with Caldecott Park and Coombe Abbey Country Park being instantly recognisable to residents and many visitors.

Rugby Borough Council is currently responsible for over 230 hectares of green space within the Borough. This includes a diverse portfolio including the Green Flag Award winning Caldecott Park, the newly created Diamond Jubilee Wood at Ashlawn Road and wildlife areas at Newbold Quarry Park. The green spaces provided by Rugby Borough Council are managed by the Parks and Grounds Service. The service provides parks management and development, grounds maintenance, allotments, cemeteries as well as coordinating activities and Britain In Bloom.



2.2 The benefits of green space

The potential benefits of green space are well documented. Within the context of the Borough of Rugby the potential benefits of green space can be summarised as follows.

Vibrant neighbourhoods - green space is an essential ingredient of successful neighbourhoods and it provides a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities. There is huge national demand for better quality open spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

Health and well being - Well-designed green space provides space for recreational activities, improving physical health and fitness, mental health and well being. Open spaces like allotments are also productive, yielding the fresh fruit and vegetables that are essential to a healthy diet.

Social capital - Green space affords opportunities for social interaction between people of different communities, fostering social inclusion and community development. It can often become a focus for community activity, involvement and capacity building, thereby helping to develop citizenship and local pride and reducing anti-social behaviour and crime.

Green networks and infrastructure - Within Rugby green space includes parks and public gardens, formal recreation facilities, children's play areas, natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, amenity green spaces, allotments, open space corridors, canals and rivers, cemeteries, closed churchyards and areas of accessible countryside. This provides the green infrastructure that is vital for connecting towns and rural areas.

Heritage and culture - Green space provides opportunities for people to get involved in creative and cultural activities by supplying a venue for events and shows or public art installations. In themselves, green spaces contribute to heritage and culture by providing reservoirs of collective memory. For example, cemeteries can operate as the biography of our communities containing important historical and cultural features that help identify our heritage.

Children and young people - Green space provides a wealth of opportunities for outdoor play, which is known to have developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people. It is important for building social, emotional and life skills and can provide a means for children to learn about risk and develop confidence and independence. Green space helps children and young people to stay healthy and tackle problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercising and fresh air. It can also provide essential diversionary activities for young people, helping to reduce juvenile nuisance. Spaces that are designed with young people's involvement also offer a safe place for young people to meet, play and 'hang out'.

The outdoor classroom - Green space can function as an 'outdoor classroom' offering formal and informal learning opportunities for schools and communities thereby contributing to lifelong learning and helping to improve educational attainment.

Regeneration and renewal - Good quality green space contributes significantly to urban regeneration and renewal projects by improving the image of the place and attracting investment. It improves investor and resident perception of the place by raising confidence in the area. Quality open space is known to have a significant positive impact on house prices,



2. Setting the scene for green space in rugby

supporting the creation of stable housing markets.

Landscape and townscape - A high quality public environment makes a positive contribution to the townscape. Attractive parks, squares, gardens and other public green spaces create a pleasant and varied townscape improving the setting of the built environment. In town centres, a pleasant and well maintained environment supports a healthy economy as it attracts new businesses and workers and increases the number of people visiting retail areas.

Biodiversity and sustainability - Well designed green space contributes towards ecological diversity, supports environmental sustainability and helps to counter pollution. Within urban open space, varied habitats help to relieve the monotony of the urban landscape with different colours and sounds and help to bring the delights of the countryside into our towns. As well as providing important visual amenity benefits in built up areas urban open space gives people the chance to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live.

2.3 Celebrating success

Rugby Borough Council has always taken a proactive approach to managing green space. Despite the absence of an existing Green Space Strategy for Rugby, the Borough Council and its partners have delivered a number service improvements and success over recent years which includes:

- Planted of over 35,000 trees in 2012/13 as part of the new Diamond Jubilee Wood;
- Refurbished children's play areas at Frobisher Road, East Union Street, Buchanan Road and GEC;
- Refurbish Caldecott Park in 2007/8 with £1 million of investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- Managed green space for a range of customers with over 650,000 annual visitors to Caldecott Park alone;
- Supported the Pavilions Residents Association to gain 50K of funds for a new play area;
- Provided new facilities for young people with the creation of a Parkour facility and BMX track;
- Protected 6 sites as part of the QE2 Fields in Trust initiative;
- Secured grant funding from the SITA environmental trust of 25K;
- Introduced new pictorial meadow wildflower areas across Rugby;
- Encouraged and facilitated more than 8000 hours of volunteer time in 2012;
- Retained Gold in the Heart of England in Bloom for Rugby since 2008;
- Retained the Green Flag Award for Caldecott Park since 2009;
- Parks and Grounds Manager receiving Pride of Rugby Award in 2013.

2.4 The changing word- Issues and themes for the future

The GSS for Rugby should be seen in the context of the wider political and financial framework,

in particular the current Coalition Government's drive to reduce overall local government expenditure and find new methods of delivering services. Key drivers are outlined in figure 2 have already demonstrated the main issues facing local government. Set against this is also a strong and continued demand for high quality public services, which include the provision of publicly accessible green spaces.

In 2010, the charity Green Space published the Blue Sky Green Space Report. The report is still relevant today and sought to improve the understanding of the importance of retaining good quality parks and green spaces, and the contribution they make to improving people's lives. It contains a strong evidence base for the case for green space with numerous facts and figures on the potential social benefits along with public consultation data.

The headlines from the report include:

- 91% of people believe that public parks and open spaces improve their quality of life;
- Half a million people volunteer on green space every year;
- Over 33 million people use green spaces in England;
- A tenth of the population use or visit them daily;
- The more often a person visits urban green spaces, the less often he or she will report stress related illness;
- A brisk walk in a green space can reduce risks of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes by 50%;
- The economic value of urban green spaces within our towns and cities is vast;
- If parks and green spaces are well managed research has shown that communities use their local spaces more, have better relationships with their council and take some pride in the area where they live.

With the sometimes conflicting issues between national agendas, change in local government and wider community aspirations the future planning, management and delivery of green spaces in Rugby will need to be more focused and flexible in the ever changing world.

The GSS for Rugby therefore will need to focus on the following primary issues for the future:

- Responding positively to reduced resources;
- Ensuring continued value for money;
- Ensuring consistent quality of green spaces;
- Demonstrating and delivering the wider benefits of green space;
- Working in different ways to ensure service delivery;
- Setting clear priorities and objectives.

3. Strategic planning for green space in rugby

3.1 Introduction

This section of the green space strategy deals with the current situation in relation to the strategic provision of green space in terms of planning policy. The purpose of this part of the green space strategy is to provide an overview of the existing situation in terms of green space planning policy in Rugby and to set out a summary of the agreed standards for the provision of green space. The information contained within this section is based on a number of adopted documents that form the Rugby Borough's Local Development Framework (LDF).

3.2 Background and context

Rugby Borough Council has a strong track record of considering the strategic planning of green space as part of the Local Development Framework. Two principal documents have informed current planning policy:

- The Rugby Open Space Audit completed by Halcrow and Alliance Planning in July 2008; and
- The Green Infrastructure (GI) Study completed by ENTEC in June 2009.

The scope of the Rugby Open Space Audit included the following elements:

- Establish context through data collection and literature review;
- Understanding Local Needs through consultation;
- An quantitative and qualitative audit of open space provision;
- Analysis of accessibility and quantitative and qualitative provision of open space;
- Identification of issues, options and recommendations for open space provision.

The scope of the Green Infrastructure included the following elements:

- Identification of GI assets;
- Review of strategies and documents relevant to GI planning;
- Identification of strategic and local GI network;
- Development of the GI vision and strategy;
- Preparation of GI policy recommendations.

Both the Rugby Open Space Audit and the Green Infrastructure Study have been used as the evidence base to inform the provision of GI and green space.



As part of the current review of Local Development Documents that support the Local Development Framework, Rugby Borough Council is currently updating the information relating to the Open Space Audit conducted in 2008. This will update the current mapping and quality audit for open space and will include the green space typologies for the Borough. It is anticipated that this information will be available in early 2014 and that this green space strategy will be revised and updated accordingly.

3.3 Evaluation and priorities

The Open Space Audit and the Green Infrastructure Study considered a range of evidence which has informed existing planning policies. In broad terms the policy recommendations for each study include:

The Rugby Open Space Audit

Rugby Borough Council should adopt the following principles:

- 1. The Council's Stewardship Role-** As the representative of the residents of Rugby, the Council should manage green spaces in the interests of the whole community.
- 2. Green Space History and Heritage-** The Council should protect and preserve the historic and architectural heritage found within Rugby's green spaces. They should ensure that this heritage is protected, now and for the future.
- 3. Green Spaces as Community Assets-** Rugby's green spaces are an essential and permanent community resource. The Council should work in partnership with partners, users, and stakeholders and involve them in the "decision making" process relating to the use, development and management of the Borough's green spaces.
- 4. Investing in Community Green Space-** The Council recognise that green spaces require investment. They should actively secure resources for the regeneration of many of their green spaces, in partnership with the local community and external agencies based on a developed "strategic network". They should ensure any investment is sustainable, maintenance regimes are developed and where new developments and initiatives are introduced, maintenance issues are taken into account in the design, management and ongoing sustainability of the facility.
- 5. Universal Access to Green Spaces-** Rugby's green spaces are available for use by all sections of the local community, including the business community. The Council should support and promote fully inclusive access and use of Rugby's green spaces for all lawful purposes.

3. Strategic planning for green space in rugby

- 6. The Right to Safety**- All sections of the local community have the right to use Rugby's green spaces in safety and without fear of crime. The Council should work in partnership with local people and other agencies in order to provide cleaner, safer and greener environments.
- 7. Education for Citizenship**-The Council should recognise that their green spaces are a rich resource for learning, not only about the living environment, but Rugby's history and culture. They should encourage the use of their green spaces as important centres of education as well as places to celebrate Rugby's cultural diversity.
- 8. Spaces for Play, Sport and Recreation**- Rugby's green spaces are an essential community resource in providing quality spaces for play, sport and recreation. They should ensure that these uses are provided for, in health, enjoyment and well being of the Borough's local communities.
- 9. Community Living Space**- The Council should continue to develop their green spaces to ensure that they remain "living spaces". They should protect and enhance the Borough's biodiversity, maximise resource efficiency by increasing recycling opportunities, establish a better use of essential energy sources and minimise the use of pesticides and chemicals.
- 10. Aiming High and Ensuring Quality**- The Council should make best use of resources available to ensure the highest quality for all their green spaces. They should strive to adopt the principles of the Civic Trust Green Flag standard across all of their green spaces and assess the quality and value of them. The Council's aim should be to build on their success in Britain in Bloom and gain Green Flag awards in all its main town parks.

Green Infrastructure Study

Rugby Borough Council should adopt the following policies:

1. Existing GI of strategic and local importance should be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.
2. New areas of green spaces should be sought that promote a range of functions, including recreation and tourism, public access, environmental education, biodiversity, water management, protection and enhancement of historic environmental assets and mitigation of the impacts of climate change.
3. New development, through its siting, layout and design should be expected to respond positively to the location of GI and contribute towards the provision of additional GI within the Borough.
4. New development should, in enhancing existing GI, seek to establish physical/functional linkages between different elements of the GI and introduce appropriate multi-functional uses of green spaces and linkages that help to broaden the existing network of accessible

areas. Where possible, new and/or improved links to the open countryside should be established.

5. For all new development, on site GI provision and/or contributions to off-site GI should be sought. Such provision should be in accordance with other adopted policies and strategies, including those relating to open space, biodiversity, landscape and historic environment.
6. Where new development will compromise, degrade or reduce the quality and/or function of existing GI, the development should not be permitted unless replacement provision is made that is of equal or greater value to that which will be lost through development. Development which compromises the strategic of local GI networks should not be permitted.
7. All outline and detailed planning applications should demonstrate consideration of the development's potential impact on the existing GI network.



3.4 Standards for planning green space provision in Rugby

Within the Rugby Open Space Audit and the Green Infrastructure Study the following standards for green space are currently applied by Rugby Borough Council.

The 2008 Open Space Audit proposed a series of quantity and accessibility standards for green space provision with the borough. Table 3 below summarises the quantity and accessibility standards currently being applied.

Green Space Typology (PPG 17)	Quantity (Hectares per 1000 popn.)		Accessibility (meters)	
	Urban	Rural	Walking threshold	Driving threshold
Parks and gardens	1.5	10	800	3500
Amenity green space	1.1	0.5	500	
Natural and semi-natural green space	2.5	10	700	3500
Provision for children young people	0.2	0.2	400	4500
Allotments	0.65	0.8	700	
Outdoor sports	3.5	5	400	3500

Table 3: Rugby Borough green space standards

3. Strategic planning for green space in rugby

Urban

The 2009 GI Study outlines a series 'standards' for developing local GI networks within Rugby. These are pertinent to existing and planned green space provision and are summarised below.

Standards for new development

1. Incorporate all areas or sites of nature conservation and historic environmental value whether designated or not, unless planning policy states to the contrary.
2. Enhance and retain the GI resource e.g. by opening up culvert watercourses.
3. Measures should be in place to comply with NERC Act 2006 and local biodiversity strategies.
4. Create GI buffers in new developments, which adjoin valuable areas of nature conservation value.
5. Habitats and landscape features should be designed to provide a sense of place and reflect local landscape character and avoid damage to historic or natural features.
6. Areas of floodplain should focus on habitat creation and linked to SUDs schemes.
7. Provide access links through the development associated with high quality natural green spaces.
8. Provide safe walking and cycling routes along green corridors that are accessible to local population centres.
9. Existing GI networks that provide green links should be maintained within the development.
10. The GI network should incorporate allotment provision to enable communities to produce their own food.
11. An implementation and management plan should be prepared for the land that forms the GI network and range of GI functions.

Standards for existing development

1. Analyse the extent to which Natural England's ANGst model is met and identify what is needed to improve adherence to the standard.
2. For areas of existing public access identify the ways in which the areas are currently used, constraints to use and opportunities for enhancement.
3. Develop an action plan to deliver identified opportunities.



4. Strategic management for green space in rugby

4.1 Introduction

This section of the GSS is concerned with the maintenance, management and delivery of green space within the Borough. The information provided provides a “snap shot” of how the current green space service is delivered on the ground and outlines issues identified as result of recent service reviews, discussions with partners and emerging opportunities and constraints that may in the future have an influence on service delivery.

4.2 Background and context

The management, maintenance and delivery of green space in Rugby has traditional been undertaken by Rugby Borough Council’s Parks and Grounds Service. The service is responsible for all parks, allotments and cemetery sites and the following functions are undertaken:

- Day to day management and responsibility of network of parks, allotments, play areas, nature areas, cemeteries and closed churchyards and semi natural areas under the ownership of Rugby Borough Council;
- Managing operation workforce of 27 staff (2013);
- Preparing specifications and ensuring maintenance of green space is delivered to the required standard;
- Dealing with and responding to enquiries from the general public;
- Working with Council Members and Officers to plan and develop green space networks;
- Commenting on planning applications and assisting with s106 and commuted sum agreements;
- Organising the Borough’s entry to Britain in Bloom;
- Organising and implementing minor landscape works projects;
- Attending and supporting community groups;
- Working in partnership with organisations to deliver events and activities with the park;
- Patrolling green spaces and resolving anti social behavior issues with police and other partners;
- Preparing management plans and action plans for sites of heritage or ecological value;
- Budgetary and financial control of £1.2 million expenditure per annum;
- Working with community groups and organisations to secure external funding;
- Marketing and interpretation of green spaces;
- Annual application for Green Flag Award at Caldecott Park;
- Managing volunteers;
- Undertake play area and park development activities;
- Representing and promoting Rugby on the regional and national stage;
- Supporting the Local Nature Partnership ;
- Introducing and managing different grassland management techniques;
- Manage the bookings of all outdoor sports facilities.

4.3 Evaluation and priorities

The Parks and Grounds Service have recently undertaken a review of service delivery, which has been informed by research, best practice, Rugby Borough Council corporate priorities, informal discussions with staff, partner requirements and feedback from the community. In light of this, the following issues have been identified for distinct service delivery themes, which are summarised below.

4.3.1 General principles for green space management

The contribution that green spaces make to the local environment, local economy, quality of life, health and well-being of residents in the Borough of Rugby have been highlighted within this strategy. The work previously undertaken to form planning policies have identified that although there is a large amount of public green space within the Borough, the current quality of the resource is poor and showing limited signs of recovery. Recovery of green space assets has however been marked where major investment has been undertaken., Examples of this are through the play area refurbishment programme and where HLF funding has been utilised at Caldecott Park.



In general terms the Parks and Grounds Service have recognised that there needs to be a more focused effort on green spaces that are of poor quality, considered to be unsafe and that are declining. The service has therefore identified the general principles for the future management of green spaces within the Borough, which include:

- *To raise the quality standards of all parks and green spaces to meet the needs and demands of both users and local residents.*
- *To protect the historic and environmental context of the Borough's green spaces.*
- *To improve access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy.*
- *To protect the borough's green spaces for the benefits they provide to the health and well being of residents.*
- *To provide sufficient quality green spaces in appropriate locations.*
- *To provide sufficient quality green space to meet the expected increased housing provision within the Borough.*

4. Strategic management for green space in rugby

4.3.2 Provision for young people

The Borough Council is responsible for 37 formal play facilities, and a further 13 youth facilities. Formal play facility provision for children and young people in the Borough includes equipped play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGAs - containing facilities for basketball, football and cricket), skateboard parks, teenage shelters, Parkour and informal kick-about areas. In addition to these there are a number of new facilities that are yet to be transferred from new developments. They are all maintained by the Council's own Parks and Grounds Service that insures that they are visited at least once a week ensuring safety is paramount and consistency of approach.

The value and benefits of play have long being established and are further expanded in the Borough Council's existing Play Strategy which looks at the qualitative and quantitative audit of play facilities. In recent years the funding for play has been supplemented by a three year Big Lottery funded Playbuilder programme, which has now ceased.

The service recognises that informal play is equally important and children use all kinds of open spaces, in addition to the traditional equipped play areas, for their games and social interaction. Based on this current situation the service has identified the following principles for the future management of services for young people.

- *All children and young people living in the Borough of Rugby to have access to play provision and teenage facilities that meet their needs in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.*
- *To provide, where appropriate, high quality playspaces and teenage facilities, to encompass all needs within the local community.*
- *To ensure that the equipment on these play spaces and facilities is inclusive, appropriate and stimulating and safe for a range of age groups and abilities and, wherever reasonable, accessible to all.*
- *To ensure that the children and young people have a continuous involvement in the design of new facilities.*



4.3.3 Partnership working, consultation and volunteering

People show their love and support for green spaces in more ways than just regular visits. Nationally over half a million individual volunteers give up their time to improve a Council managed green space. The future investment and improvement in Rugby's green spaces will also require volunteering opportunities, establishing partnerships and ensuring that the wider public are engaged through consultation. Experience has shown that good public consultation can bring about a real sense of community ownership, which is vital in achieving positive change without encountering any large scale opposition. A future principle of the service will be:

- *To ensure that local people and organisations are actively engaged and involved in the future development and maintenance of their green spaces.*

4.3.4 Community safety

The public perception of the safety of green space within the Borough of Rugby varies widely.

Key fears that are affecting this perception include:

- Anti-social behavior;
- Fear of personal safety;
- Drugs;
- Vandalism;
- Dog-fouling;
- Graffiti;
- Motorcycle nuisance;
- General congregating of youths.

The above factors have a fundamental affect on the usage and are primary barriers to why the some members of the public will not use green spaces. In many cases whole sections of the community are being disenfranchised with some areas only being utilised by groups of young people.

A large proportion of the Parks and Grounds Service budget is spent simply maintaining the sites that Rugby Borough Council provides. A significant amount of management time and resources is however spent trying to address community safety issues. The Community Safety Team have already made significant steps in trying to address some of these issues via the mechanisms of the Community Safety Partnership. Members of the various groups offer up important intelligence and assistance in meeting head on a number of the issues. A future service principle will be:

- *To work with our partners to tackle the underlying issues that prevent increased use of green spaces by all sections of the community.*

4. Strategic management for green space in rugby

4.3.5 Health and well-being

Green spaces are essential to people's health and well-being. A nationwide summary published by Greenspace in June 2007 confirmed that parks and green spaces represent a considerable attraction for members of the general public. When asked why they visit a park the answers given were:

- A quarter of respondents (25%) visit simply to relax or think;
- Over a fifth (21%) visit for peace and quiet;
- Over a quarter (27%) visit to enjoy flowers and trees;
- Just under a quarter (22%) visit to see birds and wildlife;
- Over 11% visit to feed the birds or ducks;
- Over a quarter (28%) visit to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings;
- A little under half (43%) visit to get some fresh air;
- Nearly half (45%) visit to go for a walk;
- One in ten (10%) visit to ride their bike;
- Nearly a fifth (19%) visit to walk their dogs;
- 18% visit for a family outing or with children;
- One in ten (10%) visit to meet friends;
- 16% use their visits to keep fit and around 10% visit to improve their health;
- 12% of people visit to play sports or games whereas only 4% do so to watch sports or games being played.

All of the above impact upon a person's mental or physical well-being. This shows that green spaces can play a vital role in providing opportunities for sport and recreation on a much wider scale, provided certain barriers that deter people from visiting parks are overcome. Increasing participation in physical activity is now a top priority both nationally and locally. Regular participation in sport and recreation is defined as taking part on at least three days a week in moderate intensity exercise for at least thirty minutes continuously in one session.

There is increasing evidence that green spaces can have a positive impact on a person's health. This is important as we move towards a more preventative rather than reactive medical model. Research in America has shown that park users have fewer visits to the doctor than



do non-park users. It has also been shown that park users show better health indicators than non-users when a person's health is considered holistically, including the physical, psychological and social elements, the benefits of parks and open spaces on these elements are obvious.

In the U.K., research by Dr. Richard Mitchell and Dr. Frank Popham published a report in *The Lancet* in November 2008 that looked at how the inequality in health between rich and poor can be halved with the help of green space. The researchers expressed the view that exposure to green space or the "natural environment" had an effect upon people's health and on their health related behaviours.

There is also a known relationship between health and income, with wealthier people generally being healthier. The research proved that this health gap was significantly less pronounced in areas with more open space. In the greenest areas, the death rate was approximately 50% less than those areas with the least green space. They were surprised by the difference. Mitchell and Popham argue that promoting outdoor recreation and boosting health can help get rid of stress and decrease heart disease. This, in the long run, could offer significant savings on health spending.

Sitting alongside the sporting and more active opportunities that green spaces afford is another important health based activity; contact with nature. This can be experienced by simply enjoying the seasons, experiencing solitude or the actual process of working with and growing plants. This is increasingly being seen as a means of providing relief from everyday stresses associated with life and work. Rugby Borough Council, as with many other Councils, is receiving a number of requests for support from groups and organisations who recognise that involvement in environmental matters is a good way to enjoy leisure time for all sectors of society. The inbuilt need for contact with nature is an area that will need to be addressed by Rugby Borough Council in the future. The increasing uptake in allotments is an example of this need but there is also a burgeoning involvement within the health sector; where the therapeutic qualities of horticulture, gardening and environmental exposure is becoming increasingly valued.



4. Strategic management for green space in rugby

Rugby heath profile 2011

The health of the people in Rugby is mixed compared to the England average. Deprivation is lower than average, however 2730 children live in poverty. Life expectancy is close to the national average of 78 for men and 82 for women. Life expectancy is 7.7 years lower for men and 8.3 years lower for women in the most deprived wards. About 15.6% of year 6 children and 25.8 % of adults are classed as obese.

Rugby, green spaces and health

Although green spaces are well regarded by the majority of residents there is no doubt that they could and should be utilised far more widely in order to achieve the goals outlined within existing corporate plans. The existing contributions green spaces make, via the investment in children's active play, opportunities for sport, informal recreation are well recognised. However, as the service confronts what is considered one of the most serious problems facing people today, the physical and mental well being of our residents, it is clear that green spaces must be more accessible. Equally, service managers must look to working in partnership with local communities, organisations and individuals and ensure that an open space leisure option becomes a real choice for young and old alike.

Guiding principles in relation to the Parks and Grounds Service will be:

- *To work with the health and voluntary sectors to address and tackle health and well being issues.*

4.3.6 Health and safety

In addition to normal statutory duty of care to its employees, the Parks and Grounds Services has responsibility for the safety of the public when using its accessible green space. Safe sites have a direct correlation with a reduction in the Council's liabilities as landowners, not only from an insurance perspective but also from both a legal and moral perspective. Regular inspections of the Council's varied sites are a key responsibility of all staff working within Parks and Grounds Service as these identify the many issues that affect the safety of green spaces. A considerable part of existing revenue budgets are utilised in maintaining the integrity of green space- this must remain a priority above developmental and enhancement works, so ensuring the safety of the public. However as additional legal requirements are placed on the Council the service need to address any implications that this may bring to the service. An overriding principle of the service will be:

- *To ensure that all work practices are safe, staff are appropriately trained and that green spaces are as safe as possible for all users to enjoy.*

4.3.7 Grounds maintenance

The grounds maintenance operations within the Borough has been undertaken by Rugby Borough Council Works Service Unit since 2003. The delivery of quality grounds maintenance is an essential part of the overall Parks and Grounds Service. It is a vital element of not only how the Borough appears visually but also how it is perceived by the various visitors as they pass through the Borough. It is an integral part of the Green Flag Award criteria, which is used as an internal quality measure. All operational grounds maintenance is under one service and provides the Borough Council with a flexible approach to maintenance and enables the service to balance the needs of residents with the resources available. The service therefore no longer operates to rigorous contract standards, opting for a more customer focused and experience based approach of the delivery of the service.. However it is recognised that the grounds maintenance element of the service needs to demonstrate viability and value for money for local residents. As well continuing to ensure a more customer focused approach the service will need to quantify resources inputs against specific outcomes such as customer satisfaction and increases in overall quality. A guiding principle will be:

- *To ensure quality grounds maintenance as an integral part of the overall Parks and Grounds Service, which balances the needs and requirements of the residents and visitors with the available resources.*

4.3.8 Marketing and promotion

An integral part of the overall drive to improve not only the usage of our public green space, but the image and customer perception, needs to be based on a customer orientated service, where Rugby Borough Council openly consults and communicates on wants, priorities and expectations. Good examples of communication include:

- Site leaflets, walks leaflets and event leaflets;
- Welcoming Information boards on site;
- Interpretive boards at points of interest;
- Relevant posters;
- Press releases and media coverage;
- Good website and web based media;
- Range of events.

Improvements have been made over the last three years particularly with the number of events held within Rugby's green spaces and this has benefited benefited from good media coverage. There is a need to further 'market' our service and especially the events to promote the benefits of what public open space has to offer. A management principle will be to understand our audience and:

- *To ensure the positive promotion of green spaces, through a variety of media.*

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4.3.9 Biodiversity and sustainability

Rugby Borough Council and the Parks and Grounds Service are committed to conserving biodiversity because it:

- Plays an important role in tackling climate change;
- Is an indicator of the wider health of our environment;
- Helps to sustain local economies;
- Supports other vital services that sustain life on earth (Ecosystem Services) such as the provision of clean air and water;
- Helps in the defence against floods and storms, and the management of waste and pollution;
- Contributes to our health and wellbeing;
- Is an important part of our cultural heritage and identity;
- Offers opportunities for community engagement and volunteering;
- Provides us with essential products and materials.

The Council recognises that it has a legal obligation to consider and conserve biodiversity as part of the NERC Act (2006). This legislation means that, from 1 October 2006, all local authorities and other public authorities in England and Wales have had a duty to promote and enhance biodiversity in all of their functions. The act aims to raise the profile of biodiversity and to make sure that it is considered in all local authority decisions and policies.

Rugby Borough Council has also signed the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge which commits the Council to a number of aims, which include:

- Ensure the conservation of biodiversity is incorporated into all relevant corporate strategies, plans and programmes;
- Take a leadership role for, and champion the benefits of, biodiversity within local partnerships including Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements;
- Consider the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and review policies and actions to assist wildlife to adapt;
- Participate actively in Local Biodiversity Partnerships and assist with the delivery of Local Biodiversity Action Plans;
- Protect and enhance biodiversity within the planning system and deliver the key principles for biodiversity set out in national planning guidance;
- Support the maintenance and development of Local Record Centres and seek to ensure that up-to-date biodiversity data is available and used appropriately;
- Work in partnership with others to identify, protect and enhance Local Sites of Importance for Biodiversity, taking them into account within the planning and land management systems;

- Protect and enhance biodiversity within the local authority estate;
- Promote the social benefits of biodiversity in the delivery of public services including social care, health, and recreation;
- Supporting access to nature and understanding of the natural world within schools, education programmes and community engagement;
- Raise awareness of all staff, elected members, contractors and the general public with regard to biodiversity issues.

Biodiversity action plans

At a national and regional level there are Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans which identify key wildlife species and wildlife habitats to be conserved and increased in number/area. The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) provides a local response to the UK Government's National Action Plans for threatened habitats and species. The LBAP contributes to national targets wherever these are relevant to Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull but also sets local targets. The Plan outlines how landowners, land-managers and policy makers will protect the characteristic wildlife and landscapes of our region. The plan contains 26 Species Action Plans for our threatened plants and animals. There are 24 Habitat Action Plans covering farmland, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, urban areas and post industrial land. The Council is a partner in the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and is committed both to progressing the delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and to supporting the Habitat Biodiversity Audit and Biological Record Centre which maintain up to date biological survey and records information for the Borough to inform planning and other policy decisions.

Wildlife corridors and nature areas

Within the Borough there are many natural or semi-natural green spaces such as woodlands, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water that act as the principal habitat for wildlife. Along with farmland, parks and gardens these resources form the 'Green Infrastructure' of the Borough.

In Rugby many of the semi-natural green spaces are owned and managed by the Borough Council. Other organisations also manage and offer public access to some areas, such as the Oxford Canal (managed by the Canals and River Trust) and Draycote Water being managed by Severn Trent Water.

The publicly accessible areas are important because they:

- Provide accessible green spaces close to where people live providing opportunities for recreation and exercise that can significantly benefit health;
- Provide areas, particularly for children, which can be used for informal play where they can learn and develop life skills
- Provide habitats for wildlife in urban areas;

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- Provide an opportunity for people to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live;
- Offer visual amenity benefits softening otherwise urban landscapes.

The Parks and Grounds Service can support progressing the establishment of this robust network by working with other agencies including Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, The Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership, Natural England and DEFRA, and through the planning system.

In board terms as part of the future service provision a guiding principle will be:

- *To protect and enhance wildlife sites and corridors and where possible increase the amount of linkages between habitat areas to retain and enhance wildlife species numbers and diversity.*

4.3.10 Environmental policy

The Parks and Grounds Service plays a significant role in delivering the Council's wider responsibilities for Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability. There is a wide range of statutory legislation that is applicable to the service including:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act;
- The Environmental Protection Act;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC);

The NERC act places wide ranging duties on all Council department and sections to ensure best practice is applied to ensure protection of the Natural Environment. The Council has also the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge. Our philosophy is to ensure the Parks and Grounds Service apply best practice in terms of environmental policies and sustainability in its operations and its management of the Council's green spaces. In the future management principles will be:

- *To minimise any detrimental impacts of the Parks and Grounds Services on the natural environment.*



4.3.11 Training and apprenticeships

Rugby Borough Council is an investors in people employer and is committed to the training of all staff to deliver the Green Space Strategy. The Parks and Grounds Service undertakes Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) annually and as part of this process identifies any deficiencies in competency or any training needs. The more corporate needs are then forwarded to the Human Resources Team, whilst the more specialist training requirements are looked at on an individual basis. It is widely recognised that well trained teams have:

- Increased job satisfaction;
- Increased morale;
- Reduced staff sickness;
- Increased efficiencies in processes (resulting in financial gain);
- Increased capacity to adopt to new technologies and methods of working;
- Reduced employee turnover;
- Enhance the image of the Council;
- Increased compliance with Risk Management.

The Council has recently undertaken an age profile of the staff within the Parks and Grounds Service which shows an aging workforce, with an average age of nearly 50(Rugby is not unique as this is reflected across the industry). The retention of skills and knowledge will be an important factor as existing personnel retire. The Council has therefore supported the modern apprenticeship scheme and in 2011 employed the first two apprentices. In the future a guiding principle will be:

- *To continue to train staff in appropriate methods and techniques to deliver a quality Parks and Grounds Service and to deliver modern apprenticeships.*



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4.3.12 Funding and Investment

The delivery of the policies and priorities identified within this green space strategy will be totally dependent on the future funding and investment (both internally and externally) that can be afforded to the service. The main policies relate to the improvement of the overall quality of green spaces within the Borough from their current status to ensure a minimum level of quality across all sites. This will require a review of our financing to determine how these policies can be delivered and maintained over the life of this strategy.

The current funding arrangements for green space fall into five main categories, plus the potential use of generated income:

- Revenue expenditure;
- Capital expenditure;
- Planning contributions;
- External grants;
- Income generation.

Revenue expenditure

This relates to the day-to-day running costs of the complete Parks & Grounds Service and includes wages, vehicles, machinery, purchase of equipment, materials and internal corporate costs. The overall revenue budget is based on maintaining the integrity of the existing infrastructure, but it cannot keep pace with asset depreciation the aspirations of local communities. Facilities become tired and require replacing and in many cases updating, sites are subject to misuse and damage to the infrastructure is beyond the scope of the revenue budget. Material costs have also risen substantially in the last five years, this has been at a time when revenue budgets have been reduced because of the wider economic situation. This can be demonstrated by the inability of the service to maintain large parts of green space network to an adequate standard such as footpaths.

Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure can be defined as expenditure where the benefits last more than 12 months. For the most part, this means expenditure on assets such as buildings or equipment, (for example play equipment) which can be used over a long period. The Council's capital programme is closely related to the priorities within the Corporate Plan and supports the Playground Refurbishment Programme and the proposed new cemetery and crematorium for Rugby.

Planning obligations

Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority (LPA) to enter into a legally binding agreement with a landowner/developer in association with the granting of planning permission. The obligation is termed a Section 106 Agreement. These agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. They are used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as recreational facilities, education and health. In terms of green space, the Council currently has an agreed figure per dwelling, which is used to determine overall requirements..This can relate to a single dwelling development or to a large housing estate. Planning policies relating to developer contributions will be reviewed in light of the current governments proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Any Council's approach to securing benefits through the Section106 or CIL process should be supported by evidence, and this strategy is part of the evidence audit.

External grants

The importance of external grants cannot be understated in the delivery of projects within Rugby's green spaces. Over recent years the Council has managed to secure funding form: The Big Lottery Fund for improvements to our Buchcan Road Open Space; Play England for improvement to play areas under the play builder programme (now ceased) and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the refurbishment of Caldecott Park. In many of these cases there is often a requirement for "match-funding" with at least 20-30% of the total cost having to come from the Council. However, it could be argued that a use of capital as "seed" money could be the catalyst to much wider schemes and improvements. There are also significant opportunities for the Council to work with third parties, such as football clubs or community groups, and tap the potential funding that is geared towards these groups. Working together and thinking differently may unlock a useful source of funding that could add to the funding available to deliver the communities aspirations for green space.

Potential opportunities could include:

- Various lottery grants;
- Local charity funding;
- Land Fill Tax;
- Forestry Commission grants;
- Land Stewardship schemes.

There are revenue implications attached to many of these grants however, which the Council often finds difficulty in meeting. A methodology for working with groups will need to be further developed so that the revenue implications relating to capital enhancements needs to be reconciled.

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Income generation

The current operations undertaken by the Parks and Grounds Service raise significant levels of income; this in the main however is to offset or cover expenditure in providing services such as burials, events and sports pitches. The current charging levels are set each year by Rugby Borough Council but in some cases do not actually cover the costs of the operations undertaken in providing the facilities and services. There is some potential in increasing income levels and not only by increasing charges (which if raised too high, would potentially make services cost prohibitive to use) but moreover by increasing existing and potential income streams.

Potential income streams could include:

- Undertaking private works;
- Licences, including ice cream vendors;
- Increased sponsorship;
- Rent out event space;
- Increased memorialisation opportunities with the proposed new Cemetery & Crematorium in Ashlawn Road, Rugby;
- Bid for contracts in neighbouring local authorities.

A fundamental part of the future work of the Parks and Grounds Service will be to review income and expenditure. A guiding principle will be:

- *To maximise existing and potential income streams through grants, planning obligations, current revenue income.*

4.3.13 Performance monitoring/ management and strategy review

Finding the right form of performance monitoring for measuring the quality of green space has proved difficult even nationally. The free and open nature of the access to public green space and the qualitative nature of much of the experience creates challenges and valuable public benefits which are not easily measurable. However the Parks and Grounds Services have worked with the green space quality manual and have developed a local quality measure, based upon the national model. In the future a guiding principle will be to:

- *To ensure effective strategic management of green spaces that is regularly measured, monitored and reviewed to reflect changing circumstances and requirements of the service.*



5. Planning for change and management

The evidence and details identified within the preceding chapters highlight a number of issues that need to be considered in the future. In broad terms Rugby Borough Council will need to adapt and change to meet various challenges. In broad terms future policies and actions for the provision and management of green space will need to address the following.

Making the links - demonstrating how green space can deliver and make a positive contribution to multiple agendas such as health and well being, training and education.



Making informed decisions - using research and evidence to ensure green spaces are planned and delivered where there is greatest need and demand.

Making resources go further - understanding the value of available resources and prioritising policies and actions to maximise outcomes for people and the environment.



Making positive and lasting change - working with communities and stakeholders to ensure green space provision is sustainable.

Making sure plans are realistic - letting people know what can be expected and delivering the GSS within available means.



Section 6 below sets out how these issues and opportunities translate into policies and actions for the future.

6. Policies and actions

Rugby Borough Council and its partners are committed to improving the provision and a management of green space within the Borough. Based on the information provided within the GSS and the evaluation in section 6 above, the following policies and actions have been adopted by Rugby Borough Council and will form the basis for all decision making during the lifetime of the GSS.

Each theme is designed to reflect the broad requirements of both strategic provision and operational delivery of green space within the Borough. Specific policies are then outlined which form part of the commitment by Rugby Borough Council to plan and deliver green space. The policies then cascade into specific actions, outcomes and measures. These are designed to reflect policy requirements and will form the basis of service planning and day to day delivery. The actions, outcomes and measures are designed to be flexible and will be updated and amended as when required in line with the monitoring and review process outlined in section 7 below.





Theme 1 *Strategic* green space

Policies	<p>The Council will ensure effective strategic delivery and management of green spaces that are regularly measured, monitored and reviewed to reflect changing circumstances and requirements.</p> <p>The Council will adopt the hierarchy of accessible public green space together outlined in table 2 of the Green Space Strategy.</p> <p>The Council will adopt the accessibility standards identified within relevant RBC supplementary planning guidance.</p> <p>The Council will seek to address deficiencies both in quality and quantity in green space provision through a variety of funding sources both internal and external. This will include grants secured either by ourselves or in partnership with other bodies and interest groups and the use of planning gain and developer contributions both on existing sites and on new developments.</p> <p>The Council will seek to achieve a high standard of green space for public and private areas for the wider betterment of the Borough.</p> <p>The Council will improve the quality measure scores of all of its public green spaces.</p>
Actions	<p>To undertake regular quality assessments of RBC green spaces using our local quality measure.</p> <p>To update the allotment strategy, which will sit alongside the green space strategy by December 2014.</p> <p>To adopt the playing pitch strategy to sit alongside the Green Space Strategy by April 2014.</p> <p>To develop a tree policy to sit alongside the Green Space Strategy by January 2015.</p> <p>To update the Play Strategy to sit alongside the Green Space Strategy by January 2015.</p> <p>To create more stimulating and useful open spaces for local people by reducing the amount of green desert in the Borough through the introduction of more diverse and sustainable planting.</p> <p>To raise the quality standards of all parks and green spaces to meet the needs and demands of both users and local residents.</p> <p>To protect the historic and natural environmental context of the Borough's green spaces.</p> <p>To improve accessibility to green space for all for communities to use, appreciate and enjoy.</p> <p>To protect the Borough's green spaces for the benefits they provide to the health and well-being of residents.</p> <p>To provide sufficient quality green spaces in appropriate locations.</p> <p>To provide sufficient quality green space to meet the expected increased housing provision within the Borough.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Improved quality of green space.</p> <p>Improved accessibility to green space.</p> <p>Quantitative provision of green space realised in areas of under provision.</p>
Measures	<p>Quality, accessibility and quantity standards.</p>

6. Policies and actions

Theme 2 *Quality* green space

Policies	The Council will seek to increase the overall quality of green space within the Borough. This will be achieved through systematic monitoring, review and prioritisation of resources.
Actions	<p>To use the Green Space Quality Measure along with the Green Flag Award Scheme and the Heart of England in Bloom scheme to measure the quality of its green space.</p> <p>To ensure quality grounds maintenance as an integral part of the overall Parks and Grounds service, which balances the needs and requirements of the residents and visitors with the available resources.</p> <p>To continue to train staff in appropriate methods and techniques to deliver a quality Parks and Grounds Service and to deliver modern apprenticeships.</p> <p>To embed continuous improvement in the quality of the Parks & Grounds Service to ensure of all our green spaces meets the needs of residents and visitors.</p> <p>To undertake regular quality assessments on our green spaces using our local quality measure.</p> <p>To ensure that wherever possible all works are undertaken by our trained workforce.</p> <p>To ensure that the correct level of funding and resources are identified to meet the demands of the service.</p> <p>To continue with training members of staff working within Parks and Grounds Service, to maintain a constant level of competence and skill.</p> <p>To continue to support the modern apprenticeship scheme to bring younger people into the service and help bridge the skills gap.</p> <p>To support a wider programme of learning / exchanging knowledge, both regionally and nationally to help raise the quality of our green space network.</p> <p>To maintain Green Flag Status for Caldecott Park and aim to achieve at least one other by 2016.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Quality of all green space is improved over a 10 year period.</p> <p>Green Flag Award for Caldecott Park retained for at least next 10 years.</p> <p>1 additional Green Flag Award achieved by 2016.</p>
Measures	<p>Average overall quality score for green spaces.</p> <p>Number of Green Flag Awards in Borough.</p> <p>Retention of quality awards.</p> <p>Number of modern apprenticeships within service.</p>

Theme 3 *Accessible* green space

Policies	<p>The Council will work with our partners to tackle the underlying issues that prevent increased use of green spaces by all sections of the community.</p> <p>The Council will identify gaps in green space provision to ensure accessibility for all.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that all children and young people living in the Borough of Rugby have access to play provision and teenage facilities that meet their needs in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.</p>
Actions	<p>To provide, where appropriate, high quality play spaces and teenage facilities, to encompass all needs within the local community.</p> <p>To ensure that the equipment on these play spaces and facilities is inclusive, appropriate and stimulating and safe for a range of age groups and abilities and, wherever reasonable, accessible to all.</p> <p>To ensure that the children and young people have a continuous involvement in the design of new facilities.</p>
Outcomes	Accessibility issues visibly addressed and reduced.
Measures	Accessibility standards for green space.



Theme 4 *Healthy* green space

Policies	<p>The Council will support and work with the health and voluntary sectors to address and tackle health and well being issues.</p> <p>The Council will work in partnership with the Health and Well Being Board and Public Health Warwickshire.</p> <p>The Council will focus its efforts on managing and promoting green spaces as venues for health and well being.</p>
Actions	<p>To explore opportunities for closer working with the health agencies in delivering their agendas within Rugby's green spaces.</p> <p>To work with representatives from the health & voluntary sector to identify how to reach local populations.</p> <p>To target current facilities that are in poor condition and encourage more active and healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>To develop additional facilities for young people such as bmx tracks, parkour sites and skateboard parks to encourage active and healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>To develop and encourage cycling on designated routes, linking with the wider cycling network.</p> <p>To develop and create outdoor gyms at strategic locations around Rugby to encourage active and healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>To develop marked distance posts installed for walkers and joggers to measure distance travelled.</p> <p>To encourage more diverse activities in green spaces such as Yoga, Tai-chi and exercise classes.</p> <p>To create areas of planting to be truly reflective of the seasons with areas for walking and contemplation.</p> <p>To work with mobile health screening units and encourage use in green spaces where practicable.</p>
Outcomes	<p>More diverse use of green spaces.</p> <p>New partnerships formed with health agencies.</p> <p>Increase levels of activities and events focusing on health and well being.</p> <p>Increased levels of participation in sports and activities within green spaces.</p>

6. Policies and actions

Theme 5 *Welcoming* green space

Policies	<p>The Council will ensure the positive promotion of green spaces, through a variety of media.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that all green spaces welcome all sections of the community.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that all work practices are safe, staff are appropriately trained and that sites are as safe as possible for all users to enjoy.</p>
Actions	<p>To maintain the Park Ranger at Caldecott Park and investigate how we can achieve a more visible presence on other green spaces.</p> <p>To work with other agencies to help tackle anti-social activity.</p> <p>To remove offensive graffiti from within green spaces, the next working day after being reported.</p> <p>To work with the Council's Dog Warden on enforcing the policy towards dog fouling on green spaces.</p> <p>To Review all Risk Assessments and Manual Handling Assessments to cover the full breadth of works undertaken by Parks and Grounds Service by Dec 2014.</p> <p>To maintain the water safety policy for all bodies of water that are Publicly accessible within the Borough.</p> <p>To ensure that all events on green spaces are managed via the special event procedure.</p> <p>To ensure that our quality measure inspections include the identification of any health and safety hazards.</p> <p>To review the Council's marketing and promotion in relation to green spaces.</p> <p>To develop a corporate identity for green space, which the public can immediately recognise.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Increased levels of participation and visitor numbers to green spaces.</p> <p>More diverse representation of local communities at events, activities and wider use.</p>
Measures	<p>Number of visitors to parks.</p> <p>Number of participants at events/activities.</p> <p>Percentage profile of ethnicity at events and activities.</p>

Theme 6 *Sustainable* green space

Policies	<p>The Council will seek to minimise any detrimental impacts of the Parks and Grounds Services on the natural environment.</p> <p>The Council will regularly review the Parks and Grounds Service's operations and management to minimise detrimental impacts on the natural environment.</p>
Actions	<p>To review current procedures in relation to energy consumption and resources.</p> <p>To undertake an environmental audit of all operations activities in relation to green space maintenance and management.</p> <p>To develop a framework for assessing and monitoring impacts on the natural environment.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Reduced impacts on the natural environment.</p> <p>Greater awareness amongst personnel of impacts on environment.</p>
Measures	<p>Energy/resource consumption.</p> <p>Number of sustainability initiatives and projects.</p>



Theme 7	Community green space
Policies	<p>The Council will ensure that local people and organisations are actively engaged and involved in the future development and maintenance of their green spaces.</p> <p>The Council will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to manage and enhance our green spaces.</p> <p>The Council will consult with local residents, users and 'Friends of' Groups, on all major proposals, which will may have a potential significant impact on the existing green space facilities.</p>
Actions	<p>To involve children and young people in the design; siting and management of their local play areas or teenage facilities.</p> <p>To continue with our practical preventative maintenance programme of play area equipment inspection, monitoring and repair.</p> <p>To continue to refurbish play areas as resources allow.</p> <p>To seek where justifiable and appropriate developer contributions for play facilities in line with the play strategy.</p> <p>To establish a Play Ranger service.</p> <p>To establish, develop and support 'user' or 'Friends of' groups where there is sufficient community interest to help guide the future development of facilities.</p> <p>To continue to support and develop the "Conservation Volunteers" via the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to assist in the protection and enhancement of semi-natural open space and green corridors.</p> <p>To support general volunteering on green spaces.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Opportunities for community involvement increased.</p> <p>Perception of anti social behaviour reduced.</p> <p>Volunteering by local people increased.</p> <p>More people becoming involved with the management of their green spaces.</p>
Measures	<p>Numbers of reported incidents and crimes within green spaces.</p> <p>Level of volunteer time in green spaces per year.</p> <p>Number of friends groups and or other organisations involved in green spaces.</p>

6. Policies and actions

Theme 8	<i>Network</i> green space
Policies	The Council will seek to provide, extend and enhance Green Infrastructure for the benefit of landscape, wildlife and local residents.
Actions	<p>To protect and enhance wildlife sites and corridors and where possible increase the amount of linkages between habitat areas to retain and enhance wildlife species numbers and diversity.</p> <p>To ensure the existing Green Infrastructure of strategic and local importance are protected and where appropriate enhanced.</p> <p>To ensure new areas of green space promote a range of functions and contribute to the provision of additional green infrastructure in the Borough.</p> <p>To ensure new development enhances existing Green Infrastructure and improves the linkages between different elements / broadens the existing network of accessible areas.</p> <p>To ensure all outline and detailed planning applications demonstrate consideration of the development's potential impact upon the existing Green Infrastructure network.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Green Infrastructure measurably enhanced.</p> <p>Developments have a measurable benefit to Green Infrastructure.</p>
Measures	Area of Green Infrastructure created or enhanced.
Theme 9	<i>Funding</i> green space
Policies	<p>The Council will seek to ensure continued value for money of green spaces within the Borough.</p> <p>The Council will seek to maximise existing and potential income streams through grants, planning obligations and current revenue income.</p>
Actions	<p>To continually review existing revenue expenditure to determine whether, the Council is delivering what the public want in terms of Parks & Grounds Services.</p> <p>To continue with a programme of capital Improvements to parks, play areas and green space linked to the aims identified within this strategy and also the Council's Corporate Strategies.</p> <p>To work with planning colleagues to ensure that sufficient Section 106 sums are allocated for green space and they are tightly aligned to the delivery of the priorities identified by this strategy and those within the Corporate Strategy.</p> <p>To develop a protocol/procedure for working with community groups/external agencies for applying external grants for green space enhancement.</p> <p>To make a Heritage Lottery Fund Bid application for Whitehall Recreation Ground.</p> <p>To continue to identify external funding opportunities wherever possible to help deliver the priorities within this strategy.</p> <p>To combine wherever possible capital sums, sums from section 106 agreements and external funding to deliver larger packages of enhancement works in green spaces.</p> <p>To set priorities identified in this strategy against known funding opportunities against potential partnerships for the delivery.</p> <p>To investigate potential income streams and to seek agreement on the "ring-fencing" of income to facilitate improvements to the existing green space infrastructure.</p>
Outcomes	<p>More structured investment in green spaces.</p> <p>Measurable value for money for local residents.</p> <p>Increases in external funding as a result of new partnership working.</p> <p>Measurable improvements as a result of external funding.</p>
Measures	<p>Value of external funding per year.</p> <p>Ratio of external funding achieved in relation to Council resources.</p>



Theme 10	Natural green space
Policies	<p>The Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of green spaces.</p> <p>The Council will seek to protect and enhance wildlife sites and a network of wildlife corridors - through partnership working, through the Planning system and by making appropriate designations of specific sites.</p> <p>The Council will work to improve biodiversity within the Council's formal green spaces. This will involve identifying opportunities to enhance and create wildlife habitats and where practical altering grounds maintenance and other management practices.</p>
Actions	<p>To update the tree strategy, including a formalised tree-monitoring programme, and the employment of a dedicated tree inspector, together with the appropriate budget to act on the results of the monitoring.</p> <p>To work with local residents, community groups and partner organisations to form a local wildlife partnership to help increase public involvement in and sense of 'ownership' of the Borough Council's semi-natural areas. This will involve consultation, involvement in management plans, seeking to secure grant funding and investing in volunteering.</p> <p>To continue to honor the commitments made by the Council in signing the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge. We will also work to support all other Council Departments in meeting those commitments and duties under the NERC Act.</p> <p>To work with our planning officers on the Local Development Framework, on Development Control procedures and on individual planning applications.</p> <p>To work to increase resident and visitor understanding, enjoyment of and value placed upon wildlife and wildlife habitats. This will involve 'interpretation' of wildlife and wildlife habitats through signage, publications and formal and informal educational work and events.</p> <p>To record and report national biodiversity performance management indicators NI197, which measures the degree to which positive management is occurring within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation managed by the Borough Council and by private landowners.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Increased biodiversity with green spaces.</p> <p>Extension and enhancement to Green Infrastructure networks.</p>
Measures	NI197

7. Monitoring and review

The GSS will be coordinated by Rugby Borough Council in partnership with other organizations and the local community. An annual review will be carried out as part of “Service Planning” to address any key changes in corporate policy, new legislation and any other major influences. A more comprehensive review will be carried out 5 years.

Figure 3 below sets out the planned monitoring and review process.



Figure 3: GSS Monitoring and review process



Green Space Strategy

Rugby Borough Council

Making Green Space Your Place

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